



Pacific Walrus

The Endangered Species Act and Alaska Native Hunting

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) was petitioned to list the Pacific walrus as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2008. The potential listing of walrus under the ESA raised many questions and concerns in coastal communities in Alaska that rely on the Pacific walrus as a subsistence resource. We developed the following answers to frequently asked questions for the subsistence hunting community about the listing process and potential implications for subsistence users.

What is the current status of the Pacific walrus under the ESA?

The Service evaluated the information presented in the petition and determined that it contained substantial information and warranted further review. The Service then developed a detailed status review in 2010 and published a 12-month finding in 2011 stating that listing was warranted but precluded due to higher listing priorities, making them a candidate species. That conclusion was based on how threats are likely to develop by 2100. The walrus population is currently not in trouble. In a settlement with conservation organizations, the Service agreed to either list the Pacific walrus under the ESA, or remove them as a candidate species by 2017.

Will Alaska Natives have the opportunity to provide input on these decisions?

Yes. You can provide information on the status, distribution, biology, threats, or



Marc Webber/USFWS

Pacific walrus resting on ice in the Chukchi Sea.

harvest of Pacific walrus to the Service at any time. When the Service formally initiates the 2017 status review for Pacific walrus, we will seek additional information from subsistence communities and the general public to help inform our decision. The Eskimo Walrus Commission will also have a formal role in reviewing our information and findings.

Does this petition change anything that Alaska Natives are currently doing?

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) provides for the harvest of walrus by Alaska Natives for subsistence or handicraft purposes. The status of walrus under the ESA does not change that. Current harvest levels are thought to be sustainable. If this situation changes, the Service will work closely with the Eskimo Walrus

Commission and walrus hunting communities to determine the best approach to maintaining sustainable harvests in Alaska.

Will Alaska Natives still be able to sell ivory carvings?

The creation and domestic sale of Native handicrafts such as ivory carvings is recognized as a legitimate subsistence activity and is allowable under both the MMPA and ESA.

For more information please contact:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Marine Mammals Management Office
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, AK 99503
Toll free: 800/362 5148

Or:

The Eskimo Walrus Commission
Kawerak, Inc.
P. O. Box 948
Nome, AK 99762
Toll free: 877/277 4392